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Feature Focus - February 2011



“Changes and Enduring Realities”

TAP Global Theological Immersion Trip to Thailand 2011

by Rev. Sarah Kim



Despite their unique approaches to understanding reality, Western and Eastern philosophers both agreed that life is all about the perpetual change. Change is a fact of life and there is no way to get around it—or is there? What I encountered in my second trip to Thailand on this global theological endeavor was both *change* and *enduring realities* of life.

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First, what was changed or what was different from the last trip in 2008 was the group with which I traveled. This time we had seven seminary students and a faculty member of Lancaster Theological Seminary along with our own seven participants from the Southeast Conference. The two groups merged beautifully, in light of their conscious efforts to collaborate, adapt, and to exercise love and

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in light of their previous efforts to communicate, deeply and to understand love and patience. Second, the Institute of Religion Culture and Peace's (IRCP) program had changed—the length was three weeks long with the inclusion of a special trip to Mae Sot, a small city in the northwestern border of Thailand that holds large-size Burmese Refugee Camps. To say the least, it was challenging for me to witness the living conditions of the refugees as they were without much prospects for change or hope. Third, my view of Thailand and its people had changed, only because I was able to understand better, deeper, and closer the second time around. These changes certainly made the trip experience much more meaningful and richer.

What, then, are the enduring realities? These lie closer to the inner realms of the heart and the mind. In my view, they are our desires to “communicate” and “build relationships” through inter- and intra-faith dialogues. They are our desires to “resolve conflict” and “build peace” through mutual understanding and respect. They are our desires to love, laugh, and live in peace and in health. During the trip, one participant asked me, “So, what do we do with this [experience] when we go back?” I did not answer her right there and then, but my hope is that we all remember the enduring realities and commit to actualizing them wherever we are, whatever we are doing.

Follow the continuing story in March when the global travelers will present their journals and more insight to experiences.

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